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Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Mother Teresa, in special New Year's message for UNICEF, appeals to world leaders to ensure well-being of children by giving highest priority to their health, nutrition, education and security.

+ ESCAP's 1993 Review of Economic Performance and Prospects reports combined output of economies of South and East Asia grew by almost 7 per cent this year, while world economy grew by only 1 per cent.

+ World Food Programme bolsters Mozambican agriculture through massive local purchases of emergency aid supplies -- $7 million worth of maize and beans in 1992 and 1993; expects to spend that amount again locally in next four months.

+ UNOSOM II spokesman says negotiations on de-mining projects are underway with interested Somali firms and authorities; stresses that contracts will only be awarded to those with necessary expertise.

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World-acclaimed champion of those in need, Mother Teresa, has appealed to world leaders to ensure the well-being of children by giving the highest priority to providing for their health, nutrition, education and security. In a special New Year's message recorded in Calcutta for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and globally released today, she said, "We who are adults must ask ourselves: What is the use of anything we do, if it does not help children?"

Mother Teresa emphasized that world leaders "must recognize what the future demands of us". She said: "Our children depend on us for everything -- their health, their nutrition, their education, their security, their well-being, and their happiness, their coming to know, and to love God. For all of this they look to us with trust and hope, and expectation."

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"It is my prayer for every nation on earth," she continued, "that their leaders will never forget this. May they always be mindful of the dignity and beauty of every child, and strive to protect and help each one in every way possible."

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Recent United Nations studies show that, while the world economy grew only by 1 per cent in 1993, the economies of South and East Asia retained their dynamism and performed markedly better than those in other regions. According to a study soon to be released by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), 1993 Review of Economic Performance and Prospects, the combined output of the region's developing economies grew by 6.9 per cent this year.

Several factors account for this continued strength. Despite the general slow-down in the volume of world trade, most developing countries in the region were able to maintain or increase the level of their exports, due in part to a growing intra-regional trade. Substantial capital inflow, sustained domestic demand and a favourable policy environment also fuelled economic performance. South Asian countries, also characterized by their huge populations, have begun to reap the benefits of economic reform programmes undertaken in the previous years. The combined GDP growth of Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka has been estimated to be 4.9 per cent in 1993 and policies aimed at stabilization and structural adjustment should allow the economies of both Bangladesh and Pakistan to grow by more than 5 per cent in 1994.

The most striking performance cited in the report was again that of the Chinese economy, with an estimated gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 13.2 per cent in 1993. By any statistical measure, China has achieved tremendous economic success over the last decade; gross national product (GNP) per capita has nearly tripled.

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The World Food Programme (WFP) office in Mozambique reports that through massive local purchasing of food, it has been able to help bolster the country's food security. The Programme said yesterday that in 1992 and 1993, it bought about $7 million tonnes of maize and beans in the country, and it plans to spend roughly the same amount there in the next four months.

The commodities are brought from local associations, producers and traders, and the WFP insists that traders guarantee farmers a fair price. The food is stored by the WFP in its warehouses, to be distributed during the lean season as emergency aid to displaced people and returnees in the same areas, thus, cutting transport costs.

Local maize production during 1993, the first year of peace, has been estimated at 533,000 tonnes, four times the yield in 1992. Although still far below the country's potential and needs, this is the first significant

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improvement in years, and an indication of the speed with which this sector may grow. FAO's Director of Operations, Phillip Clarke, says, "With good rains and continuing peace, Mozambique is on its way to recovery, but it needs to build a solid food security safety net."

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A spokesman for the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) reported today that preliminary negotiations on de-mining projects were being held with various Somali groups, among them a company in the Garbahary-Luuq area, and with private firms or authorities in Sablaale, North Mogadishu, Galkayo and Belet Weyne. The spokesman said it was hoped that the de-mining projects would be undertaken by Somalis themselves. He stressed, however, that UNOSOM II would ensure that prospective de-mining enterprises had the necessary training and expertise before they were awarded any de-mining contracts.

The spokesman reported also that a farm is to be established in the Baidoa region to accomodate former militiamen, under an agreement reached between a UNOSOM II demobilization team and regional and district council officials in Baidoa. He said that a poultry and vegetable cooperative would be started early next year, run by the militiamen themselves. The demobilization team, which included an agronomist, had approved a site for the project.

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